

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2538

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 7074

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EO 111652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ, US

SUBJ: HIGHLIGHTS OF 394TH PRC MEETING, DECEMBER 11

1. TREATY-RELATED MATTERS: AMBASSADOR RECOUNTED RESULTS OF HIS RECENT WASHINGTON CONSULTATION WITH EMPHASIS ON HIS CALLS ON VARIOUS SENATORS TO PRESENT OUTLOOK OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AS VIEWED FROM PANAMA. THIS LED INTO GENERAL DISCUSSION OF CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC EDUCATION EFFORT WHICH MUST BE UNDERTAKEN TO ACHIEVE APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE OF TREATY. SALIENT CONCLUSIONS WERE: (A) EFFORT SHOULD COMMENCE NOW; (B) REQUIREMENT FOR CONCERTED ACTION BY ALL CONCERNED; (C) NEED TO CREATE PUBLIC CONSTITUENCY IN SUPPORT OF MODERNIZED RELATIONSHIP; (D) SPECIAL PROBLEM OF PAN CANAL EMPLOYEES (BOTH U.S. AND LOCAL) WHO WILL BE MOST AFFECTED IN TERMS OF JOBS AND CONDITONS OF EMPLOYMENT. IN CONNECTION WITH LATTER POINT, GOV. PARKER PRAISED EMBOFF APPEARANCES BEFORE LA AND US CIVIC COUNCILS AND SUGGESTED EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF AMB. BUNKER ADDRESSING SMALL NUMBER OF PAN CANAL WORKERS AT UNPUBLICIZED MEETING AT AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY.

2. SOFA: GOVENOR REITERATED STRONG FEELING THAT SOFA SHOULD ENCOMPASS PAN CANAL EMPLOYEES. HE DECLARED THIS
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WOULD BE EASIER THAN AND PREFERABLE TO ATTEMPT GRANT

PRIVILEGES SEPARATELY UNDER TREATY. HE EXPRESSED OPINION THAT THIS SHOULD BE MORE ACCEPTABLE POLITICALLY TO GOP. GOVERNOR BELIEVES GOP CONCERNS STEM FROM EARLIER PERIOD WHEN LARGE NUMBER OF LOCAL EMPLOYEES ALSO ENJOYED COMMISSARY AND OTHER PRIVILEGES. RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF US EMPLOYEES WOULD HAVE LOW VISIBILITY UNDER SOFA. GOVERNOR CLAIMED THIS WOULD NOT IMPINGE ON PANAMANIAN SOVEREIGNTY, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF FAR-REACHING US CONCESSIONS ON CRIMINAL AND CIVIL JURISDICTION. GOVERNOR SAID HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO COMMENT ON LETTER FROM AMBASSADOR BUNKER REQUESTING IDEAS FOR ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS BUT HE COULD NOT BE VERY FORTHCOMING IN THIS REGARD.

3. PANAMANIAN COUNSELOR: GOVERNOR REPORTED PROPOSAL TO APPOINT GOP COUNSELOR TO PAN CANAL PRESIDENT HAD TAKEN TWIST SINCE BOARD APPROVAL. GOP CANDIDATE NOW GABRIEL LEWIS WHO HAS REQUESTED EXTENSIVE ORIENTATION PROGRAM BEFORE DECIDING ON NATURE OF POSITION AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT. CONCEPT SEEMS TO BE CHANGING FROM THAT OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE INVOLVED IN DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS TO ONE WITH LIAISON AND PROBLEM-SOLVING FUNCTIONS. FROM GOVERNOR'S STANDPOINT THIS MAY BE PREFERABLE, ALTHOUGH HE EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE CONFLICT OF INTEREST PROBLEMS GIVEN LEWIS' EXTENSIVE BUSINESS INTERESTS. EVEN THOUGH FINAL ACTION NOT EXPECTED UNTIL JANUARY AFTER LEWIS MEETS BOARD MEMBERS WHO WILL CONVENE IN PANAMA, GOVERNOR FEELS THAT A CHANNEL TO GOP HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED. LEWIS WANTS A TITLE BOTH IN GOP AND IN PAN CANAL. THIS WOULD POSE PROBLEM IF PAN CANAL POSITION IS FULL TIME ONE.

4. SQUATTERS: GEN. FLEMING REPRESENTED CINC WHO HOSPITALIZED FOR MINOR SURGERY. GENERAL CONFIRMED EARLIER REPORT THAT SQUATTER REMOVAL PROCESS IS BEHIND SCHEDULE AND REITERATED CINC'S REQUEST THAT AMBASSADOR SEEK WAY TO APPRISE GENERAL TORRIJOS.

5. HOWARD AFB AS ALTERNATE TO TOCUMEN: GEN. FLEMING REPORTED THAT RECENT LABOR PROBLEMS OF TOCUMEN AIR CONTROLLERS RAISED POSSIBILITY OF DIVERTING TRAFFIC TO
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HOWARD AFB. USAF HAS INSTRUCTED SOUTHCOM THAT USE OF HOWARD AUTHORIZED ONLY IN BONA FIDE EMERGENCY CASES, NOT INCLUDING AIR CONTROLLER WALKOUTS. REASONS ARE LACK OF RAMP AND RUNWAY FACILITIES AND NEED TO EXCLUDE CUBAN AND OTHER BLOC AIRCRAFT.
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